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By-Fox, David J.; Ward, Eric

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Evaluated is a summer project, funded by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Title I in New York City. A group of musically talented high school students from the city's poverty areas prepared a program stressing the musical contributions of minority groups. This program was presented at elementary school assemblies. Assessment of effectiveness of preparation and training, performance, and reactions of participants formed the basis of this evaluation. The data show that, although performers and audiences enjoyed the experience, better administrative and fiscal arrangements are needed. For a history and description of ESEA Title I in New York City, see UD 007 904. (NH)

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EVALUATION OF NEW YORK CITY TITLE I

EDUCATIONAL PROJECTS 1966-67

SUMMER MUSICAL TALENT SHOWCASE FOR DISADVANTAGED HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

By David J. Fox and Eric Ward

November 1967

UD 003 645

The Center For Urban Education
33 West 42nd St., New York, N.Y. 10036

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33 West 42nd Street
New York, New York 10036

SUMMER MUSICAL TALENT SHOWCASE FOR DISADVANTAGED HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

David J. Fox and Eric Ward

Evaluation of a New York City school district educational project funded under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (PL 89-10), performed under contract with the Board of Education of the City of New York for the summer of 1967.

Conducted under subcontract by the City College Research Foundation.

UD 003 645

Committee on Field Research and Evaluation
Joseph Krevisky, Assistant Director
George Weinberg, Title I Coordinator

November 1967

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
I	INTRODUCTION	
	Description of the Program	1
	Objectives of the Program	2
	Evaluation Design	2
II	RESULTS	
	Implementation	4
	Performers' Response	5
	Audience Response	6
	Observers' Reaction	7
	APPENDIX A: Tables	A1
	APPENDIX B: Instruments	B1
	APPENDIX C: Staff List	C1

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Description of the Program

During the Summer of 1967, a group of 25 musically talented high school students from disadvantaged areas of New York City were to prepare a program stressing the musical contributions of minority groups. The planning and rehearsal of the program was to take place in May and June under the guidance of a creative and experienced teacher-coordinator. During the six summer weeks subsequent to the rehearsals, under the sponsorship of the Human Relations Unit of the Board of Education, the group was to visit elementary schools financed under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and present their program in assembly. Nonpublic and public school children attended these summer day elementary schools.

To qualify as a participant the high school students had to be able to sing, dance, or play a musical instrument, and reside in a disadvantaged area of New York City. Nonpublic high school students were eligible to perform in the group. The performers were to be paid $1.50 an hour for 20 two-hour rehearsal sessions during May and June, and for thirty 4½ hour sessions during the six week summer performing period. The teacher-coordinator was to be compensated at standard rates.

Objectives of the Program

The program was designed to: 1. build the motivation of the teenage performers by demonstrating that their talents are valuable and desirable to the community; 2. expose pupils to a field of musical literature representative of minority group contributions, and 3. provide a source of assembly programs for the summer elementary schools that would be effective as well as enlightening and entertaining.

Evaluation Design

The objectives of the evaluation included plans for assessing: the effectiveness of preparations and training for the assembly programs; the performance of musically talented participating students at assembly programs; the reactions of the participants including the supervisors at the summer schools where the performances were given, the teacher-coordinator, and the performers.

Observation of performances was used to assess the effectiveness of preparations and training, and to assess the performance of the musically talented participating students.

The project evaluator observed a performance of the show in its entirety on August 4, and observed two shows partially August 8 and 9. Individual interviews with all participants were conducted by the project evaluator on August 8, 9, and 17.

To assess the reactions of the participants and the attitudes of the student performers, two methods were used: 1. Brief questionnaires suited to supervisors and teachers in summer schools were administered (Reactionnaire for Summer Talent Showcase, Appendix B); 2. Short interviews with the teacher-coordinator, and all student performers. The instrument employed here was the Talent Showcase Interview Sheet (Appendix B).

Chapter II

RESULTS

Implementation

The Musical Talent Showcase involved 20 students, 8 girls and 12 boys, ranging in age from 15 years to 18 years and representing nine schools and six different neighborhoods in Brooklyn. Four of the students had graduated high school, and the remaining 16 were in eleventh and twelfth grades. One of the boys served as technical assistant. The show was scheduled to be presented in 24 different schools with an additional 26 schools invited. While some performances were cancelled, the great majority were presented as scheduled.

The talent show program was comprised of 13 numbers, including an audience participation finale. The teacher-coordinator served as master of ceremonies. The majority of the numbers were instrumental, dance, or both, with recorded music accompanying three dance numbers. Three boys provided the solo vocals.

Most of the performers appeared to their street clothes, without costume, except for the dancers (all girls) who wore their own leotards. No scenery or backdrops were used except those which may have been incidentally provided by the school. The Showcase provided its own public address system and phonograph.

Performers' Response

The data obtained from the Talent Showcase Interviews with the performers indicated that 14 of the 20 heard about the program through their music teachers. Of the other six students, one heard about the program from his teacher, two from friends, and the remaining three heard about it from the director. Most (14) of the performers joined because they "liked music." Other reasons for joining included job, money, experience and practice.

As a result of their experiences before live audiences, the performers felt less nervous, more relaxed, and more sure of themselves. Sample responses to their experiences were: "nothing to it!" "like walking across the street," "easier, more relaxed," "I don't have a lump in my throat."

Most of the students interviewed liked the show the way it was, but indicated some minor revisions based on personal preferences. These ranged from more classical music and jazz to a large ensemble with more instruments and singing.

Performers believed this summer experience provided them with new insights about themselves. Most notable was that four of the performers became aware for the first time that they had talent. Eight performers said that their ability to function in interpersonal relationships was improved as a direct result of participating in the show. In addition, the summer experience reinforced desire of 15 performers to seek

a career in or related to music, either as a music teacher, a musician, or some other involvement with music. Nineteen of the performers said they would participate again in a program similar to this one.

Audience Response

Forty-six administrators and teachers from 19 different schools responded to the Reactionnaire for Summer Talent Showcase Performance. There was consistent agreement among them that "most" of the children who saw the show enjoyed the performance. Forty-eight per cent of the respondents felt that the showcase had provided an "inspiration" and a "motivation" for the children who had seen it, and that it had tended to raise the "level of their self-image." Moreover, about ten per cent felt that "some" of their children were now interested, or more interested than before in learning to play an instrument, sing, or dance.

Most of the teachers and administrators felt that the performers were excellent, representative of the audience to which they played and thus provided easy identification on the part of the audience. One respondent stated it this way, "the children saw other children from their own backgrounds being successful."

Additionally it was noted that children in the aud-

ience were exposed to various art forms, and that the performance was "good culturally as well as being good entertainment." Three respondents noted that the performance made the audience aware that children can be wholesome and still be socially acceptable. When asked whether the program should be continued, all of the respondents recommended that it be repeated, with somewhat more than half (53 per cent) recommending retaining the same format. The modifications in content that were suggested seemed to be based on personal preference and often were contradictory: i.e., "more dancing" was suggested, and so was less dancing. Increased audience participation, skits uting younger children and using more Spanish-speaking children were also suggested.

Forty-three of 44 respondents who rated the value of the performance felt that attending had been a "valuable" or "very valuable" educational experience for the children in their school; no one rated the performance as having "little" or "no value." Asked what proportion of the audience had enjoyed the show, 43 replied that "most" or "all" of the children had enjoyed the performance. Ninety per cent of these administrators and teachers reported that they themselves had enjoyed the show "a great deal." The remaining ten per cent rated the show "somewhat" enjoyable.

Observers' Reaction

Great stress was placed on two of the three objectives:

motivating the performers and providing assembly programs for the summer day elementary school program. Minimal attention was given to exposing pupils to "musical literature representative of minority group contributions." The only exception was, perhaps, the selections using the music of "Porgy and Bess," Soul Sauce," and"Soul Finger." Even in these numbers the "contributions" were subtle and complex. All 13 numbers were announced enthusiastically by the master of ceremonies, but they were not related to any theme. Indeed, the emphasis was not so much on the music as it was on the abilities of the performers. This approach, in part, may have accounted for the restlessness of the audience during the classical (cello and violin) and semi-classical ("Trumpet Lullaby") selections.

The first objective of the program, "to build motivation of the teenage performers" seems clearly to have been attained despite self-defeating administrative procedures. As of August 10, the performers had not been paid since June, at which time they had received a modest check for May rehearsals. That these performers still regarded their talents as "valuable and desirable to the community," even without receipt of the promised renumeration, attests to the personal staisfaction they gained from the experience, plus the confidence they placed in the teacher-coordinator. For as long as she could, the coordinator provided the performers with subway tokens and pocket money

to pacify parents looking for some evidence of summer employment. But she finally had to admit her helplessness to remedy the payment situation.

The second objective which also achieved with much success was that the numbers in the show were arranged to maintain interest and enthusiasm. When the show had ended "the joint was jumping!" Teachers, for the most part, had few disciplinary problems except during the classical numbers, although the musicians were talented and performed flawlessly (of unusual ability was the cellist - the only Puerto Rican in the show, and basically self-taught).

Although most of the musicians appeared to have basic ability, with a couple of exceptions few appeared outstanding. It is possible that time and the requirements of the show did not permit each performer the opportunity to demonstrate his skill fully. There were a few "sour" notes in the course of the program, but the master of ceremonies ascribed these to humidity. One performer suggested that more practice would have taken care of the "humidity."

The dancers were more attractive physically than choreographically, except for the "soul" numbers, in which they appeared more limber. Any venture into "show business" should include money for costumes and scenery. Coordinated costumes would have enhanced the poorly lighted, dull stages of the

auditoriums in the older schools. The depressing atmosphere of some auditoriums placed an additional challenge on the performers which even most professional entertainers would find difficult to overcome. Even with these limitations, the dance numbers were received with obvious enthusiasm.

The project evaluator agreed with the teachers and administrators in noting that the content of the program, while entertaining, was not engrossing. As an educational experience, more could have been accomplished if the talents of the students had been woven around a central theme or basic plot. Also, the program's value to the performers might have been greater asked to adjust and express their talents around a core concept.

In summary, the data indicate clearly that the performers and the audiences enjoyed the experience, but future sponsorship of the program might do well to consider, better administrative assistance and support, and more regular financial arrangements for the performers who have to qualify for a job that is only part time and lasts for only six weeks of the summer.

APPENDIX A

Table 1

Frequency Distribution of Audience Size in Schools in Which the Talent Showcase was Presented and From Which Reactionnaires Were Received

Audience Size	Number of Schools
Less than 100	2
100 to 299	6
300 to 499	7
500 to 699	4

APPENDIX B

Talent Showcase Interview Sheet

#_____

Age_____ Sex_____ Grade Level ____

High School attending_____

Resident of what community_____

1. How did you hear about the show?

2. Why did you join?

3. Compared to your first performance, how do you feel now when you perform?

4. If you were able, what features in the show would you eliminate or improve (or add)?

5. Have you learned anything about yourself or other people or groups from participating in the show?

6. Has your participation in the show made you think about your future? (If yes, in what way?)

7. Do you think most of your friends would benefit from this kind of experience?

8. Would you participate in a similar showcase again?

Reactionnaire For Summer Talent Showcase Performance

1. School_____

2. Position of Person Completing Reactionnaire: Supervisor___ Teacher ___

3. How much of the performance did you see? a) all___ b) part only ___

4. How well did you like it? a) A great deal___ b) somewhat___
c) only a little___ d) not at all___

5. Number of children who saw performance_____

6. How many children do you believe enjoyed the performance?
a)all___ b) most___ c) some___ d) a few___ e) none at all ___

7. Were you given advance information as to the nature of performance?
a) Yes___ b) No___

8. If you were given advance information, was the performance what the information led you to expect? a) Yes, in all respects___ b) yes, in most respects___ c) No___

9. If you answered "b" or "c" to question 8, would you please indicate briefly which of your expectations proved wrong?

_____

_____

10. How well organized was the performance you viewed? a) very well organized___ b) well organized___ c) poorly organized___ d) very poorly organized___

11. To what extent do you believe attending the performance was a valuable educational experience for your children? a) extremely valuable___
b) valuable___ c) of little value___ d) of no value___

12. Would you please briefly explain your answer to question "11"._____

_____

_____

13. If you were planning the program for next summer, what would you do about the Talent Showcase Program?
a) Repeat it as it was done this year _____
b) Repeat it, but change the content to _____

_____
c) Eliminate it_____

Please return in the stamped envelope attached to:

Office of Research
Klapper 104
The City College
New York, N.Y. 10031

APPENDIX C

Staff List

<u>David J. Fox</u>, Evaluation Chairman

Director, Office of Research and Evaluation Services Chairman, Department of Social and Psychological Foundations, The City College

<u>Eric Ward</u>, Project Director

Lecturer, School of Education, The City College

<u>David Stanard</u>, Research Assistant